

# CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE



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# THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS

## Historical Overview

The origins of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC) can be traced back to the 1918 election of Frederick M. Roberts to the California State Assembly. Mr. Roberts was the first African-American to serve in the California State Legislature. In those early years, Assemblyman Roberts and other pioneering African American members of the Legislature focused their efforts on eliminating laws and policies that restricted African-Americans from exercising their civil, social and political rights.

In 1967, the CLBC was officially established under the leadership of Senate Majority Leader Mervyn Dymally with Assembly Members Willie Brown, Yvonne Burke, Bill Greene, John Miller and Leon Ralph. The founding members believed that a Caucus representing the concerns of the African-American community could provide a collective political force for creating a more just and equitable society. Throughout its history, the CLBC and its members have been instrumental in crafting and supporting legislation to advance the quality of life for all Californians, including the areas of health care, employment, economic development, education and the criminal justice system.

Over the past four decades, the CLBC has achieved many significant accomplishments that have empowered families, promoted equality and improved the lives of millions of Californians. This includes legislation to expand government contracting with minority and women-owned businesses; the divestment of the state's financial assets in companies doing business in then-apartheid South Africa; the establishment of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a state holiday; the creation of the Commission

on the Status of African-American Males; and the formation and operation of the Center for African American Education Excellence and Achievement at the California State University Dominguez Hills.

Other legislative achievements over the years include the establishment of the California Museum of Afro-American History and Culture; the passage of legislation prohibiting the practice of "redlining" in the home loan industry; and higher standards and increased accountability of our public schools in an effort to close the achievement and opportunity gaps. Legislative accomplishments such as these have helped to lay a foundation for the opportunities that are afforded African-Americans and other minorities in California today.

Over the past 45 years, Caucus Members authored numerous pieces of legislation to promote the interests of the African American community including legislation to end prison gerrymandering, protect Allensworth State Park, and establish criminal penalties for human trafficking. This past year, we have been actively engaged in crafting a responsible budget that reflects the reality of the current economic crisis, while keeping our commitment to protect the state's safety net for its most vulnerable citizens.

The CLBC is steadfast in its mission to bring about positive changes to the African-American community in California. In order to ensure success, the CLBC is fighting to maintain hard-won accomplishments so that African-Americans and all Californians are provided with an opportunity to fulfill their potential.

## CLBC Achievement During 2011

Over the past year, the Caucus held numerous events up and down the state, that reached out to the entire community to increase knowledge and understanding about the contributions of African-Americans in California in the past and present. Among the other highlights and accomplishments, the CLBC during 2011:

- At our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Breakfast in January 2011, then newly elected Governor Jerry Brown reminded the 500 people in attendance about the importance of education, and proclaimed education a Civil Rights issue for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Hosted an exhibit commemorating the 50th anniversary of the "Freedom Riders" that helped dismantle Jim Crow practice in the deep South. A reception at the California Museum honored 11 Californians who participated in this historic desegregation movement.
- Co-Sponsored the annual Black Youth Leadership Project's Open House which brought over 100 students from throughout California to the Capitol to promote civic engagement and encourage academic achievement.
- Co-hosted a free screening of the documentary, "When I Rise," that chronicled the story of courage and determination of an African American opera singer in segregated Texas.
- Co-hosted several African-American art exhibits and cultural events in Northern and Southern California that featured some of our nation's greatest artists and their work.
- Sponsored a reception and photo exhibit in the Capitol highlighting the African American municipal, superior, appellate and Supreme Court judges serving in the California Judiciary over the past 50 years.
- Hosted a series of free Healthy Lifestyle Conferences that provided a wealth of information to the community about improving their health and access to health care.
- Held a two day Legislative Policy Conference that drew hundreds of Californians who interacted with Legislators and stakeholders, discussing issues and solutions.
- Co-convened a Town Hall Meeting in Los Angeles to discuss the California High Speed Rail Project and to hear about contracting disparities and opportunities for minority-owned businesses.
- Sponsored a week-long Student Leadership conference for approximately 50 students at California State University, Sacramento and in the Capitol. Students were introduced to government and community service, as well as the legislative process. In lectures, discussions, individual and group exercises, students were given tools to better understand the challenges of leadership.
- Awarded scholarships totaling \$51,000.00 to California's most promising and deserving young scholars to help them fulfill their dreams of attending and completing college.